THE RAGTIMER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1974

PUBLISHED BY
THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE
PRESERVATION OF
CLASSICAL RAGTIME

INFORMATION FOR MUSIC, BOOK AND RECORD COLLECTORS

We usually reserve this page for the purpose of keeping members informed as to items for sale by the SOCIETY as a service to its members. At the present time we are at work on a revised issue of our catalogue which we expect to send out in the mail with the second issue of THE RAGTIMER for 1974 (March/April).

For the current issue we decided to bring other sources of material to your attention.

The Vestal Press - P. O. Box 97 - Vestal, New York 13850, U. S. A. has recently issued its 1974 (#10) edition CATALOG of Books and Records. The subject matter relates to Player Pianos, Orchestrions, Music Boxes, Photo Players, Reproducing Pianos, Coin Pianos, Reed Organs, Pipe Organs and Band Organs. The Vestal Press is owned and operated by SOCIETY member Harvey N. Roehl.

Book - The Complete Entertainment Discography - from mid 1890's to 1942. by British author Brian Rust. This is his seventh book and traces the recording careers of the great entertainers, singers, comics, acting, vocal groups in show business - clothbound, 677 pages - publication date October 3, 1973 by Arlington House Publishers, 81 Centre Avenue, New Rochelle, N. Y. 10801, U. S. A.

Book - Annual Index to Popular Music Record Reviews 1972 by Andrew D. Armitage and Dean Tudor (Member of our Society). This is a new approach. The first volume of an annual index to published reviews of long-playing recorded popular music in some 35 selected American, Canadian and British journals. Armitage is Director of the Public Library at Owen Sound, Ontario. Tudor is Research Librarian, Ministry of Treasury, in the Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs Library at Toronto, Ontario - 467 pages, clothbound - published 1973 by Scarecrow Press, Inc., P. O. Box 656, Metuchen, N. J. 08840, U. S. A.

MUSIC FOLIO - Favorite Songs of the Nineties Edited by Robert A. Fremont of DOVER PUBLICATIONS - contains 89 original versions with the verses included - 9 x 12 paperbound over 400 pages. DOVER PUBLICATIONS, Inc., 180 Varick Street, New York, N. Y. 10013, U. S. A. - available also from MUSICAL AMERICANA - HARRY DICHTER - Apt. 808, Brighton Towers, Atlantic City, N. J. 08401, U. S. A. Harry Dichter offers other material that may be of interest to ragtimers.

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FINAL NOTICE

1974 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

This is the last issue of THE RAGTIMER mailed out to members who have failed to renew their membership for the year 1974.

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FOUNDED 1962
INCORPORATED 1970

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non - profit corporation having the following objects:

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

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RAGTIME...
UNDER YOUR HAT

During the past twelve years our SOCIETY has been trying to maintain and build an interest in RAGTIME MUSIC for its members. It is apparent that the impact of our collective efforts reaches far beyond the creation of a special interest group. There has been a strong arousal of interest in ragtime by the public sector. It has been so much so that the response for our kind of music has almost lead to an embarrassment of riches through the attention given by newspapers, magazines, book and music publishers, the recording industry, and by those in television, radio and theatre, including the concert stage. Institutes of learning such as universities, colleges and libraries are keenly aware of the historical and classical importance of ragtime music.

As we enter 1974 we must keep in mind the sobering warning that public involvement can wane in time as it becomes attracted to fresh interests and new fads. In a positive sense our SOCIETY continues with the task of preserving ragtime. Your loyalty and dedication to ragtime will provide the base for the endless survival of the music. DO YOUR PART TO KEEP RAGTIME ALIVE AND WELL!

Here in Toronto we were given a ragtime treat by JOHN ARPIN on Monday night, January 4th, on CJRT-FM radio. John performed a concert from the Ontario Science Centre covering the ragtime segment of the program. The other half of the concert covered early jazz played by the Metro Stompers. The Arpin contributions

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consisted of Mississippi Rag, The Entertainer by Joplin, Ragtime Nightingale by Lamb, and John's own composition, Toronto Blues. The crisp clean execution of the rags lived up to the Arpin trademark.

Max Morath is now well launched into his new show "The Ragtime Years". It was given a successful run at Denver toward the end of 1973. Max still finds time to visit the recording studios. His latest record was an LP for Vanguard "The World of Scott Joplin". We hear now that Max will soon have a new one based on Irving Berlin's early Rag Songs.

In connection with the BOOK REVIEW by Tex Wyndham, we have chosen a picture of the "Classic Piano Rags" cover for the last page of this issue of THE RAGTIMER.

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THE SCOTT JOPLIN RAGTIME FESTIVAL, INC.

Post Office Box 967
Sedalia, Missouri 65301

Join Us Where Classical Ragtime Began
July 25–27, 1974

Ragtimer Larry C. Melton is the Festival Director. He expects the formal details and program planning to be announced in the near future. Larry will welcome your attendance and support. Write to the above address for the latest news.

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Members wishing to obtain a copy of "The Art of Ragtime" by Schafer and Riedel should contact Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803, U.S.A. Price is $10.00.

To date The Society has not been able to make any arrangement to offer the book directly to members.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

TO

EUBIE BLAKE

ON

HIS 91ST BIRTHDAY

FEBRUARY 7, 1974

FROM THE MEMBERS OF

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INCORPORATED

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The phenomenon of a hard-working Eubie Blake, the complete perfectionist in his artistic craft, still performing on stage in position "one" and still taking numerous curtain calls some 25 years after the normal retirement age of 65 has passed by, has a glitter about it that even attracts the attention of the financial world. Who would have thought, least of all Eubie, that his name would go up in lights on WALL STREET? Pamela Hollie, Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal wrote the following article about Eubie which was published in the October 23, 1973 issue of The Journal.

"The Comeback Kid

At Age 90, Eubie Blake Is Wowing Them Again With Ragtime Sound

To Fans of Old-Time Music, He & His Piano Playing Are Authentic Link With Past

'But My Best Year Was 1907'

Hands above his head like a prize fighter, the elderly little man scampers out to a big grand piano at midstage. Behind him are the 100-piece Boston Pops Orchestra and its conductor, Arthur Fiedler. Out front are hundreds of music lovers and a massive television audience.

Without a quaver in his booming voice, the pianist announces his first number. "I'm going to play a piece I wrote in 1899," he says, pausing to let the date sink in. " 'Charleston Rag,' ladies and gentlemen." Then he plunges into a fast, polyrhythmic piece, sliding back and forth on the piano bench, tapping his feet and reaching for the extreme ends of the keyboard. His hands fly. "Get 'em, Eubie," he says, smiling. The audience applauds wildly.

Eubie Blake looks old, but not as old as he really is. He was 90 last February. Yet he plays with the energy of someone a half-century younger.

"Sometimes I think the people are kidding me," says the former bordello piano player, vaudevillian, Broadway musical writer and conductor. "I can't play that good." But nobody is kidding. At 90, Eubie Blake is making a comeback.

Holding the Key

"I'm having a ball," he says. This year he has performed at the Newport-New York Jazz Festival at Carnegie Hall, at New York's Lincoln Center, at the Molde Jazz Festival in Norway and with the Boston Pops for Old Timers Night. Last year he appeared at the Berlin Jazz Festival. He does several performances a month, as many as eight sometimes. He has appeared on the Johnny Carson show three times, on the Mike Douglas show and on "Black Omnibus" with James Earl Jones. He has had theaters named in his honor, and honorary degrees presented to him and had a "Eubie Blake Day" proclaimed by his hometown, Baltimore. "I've got the key to Boston," he says.

Eubie gets up to $2,500 per performance these days, and his royalties from some 315 pieces bring in over $15,000 a year. "I'm back on top," he says. "This is the best year yet."

Eubie's comeback is linked to a growing interest in early American music, part of the nostalgia craze that has brought back jazz, the scat singing of the 1940s and rock 'n roll.

Ragtime, which is characterized by elaborately syncopated rhythms in the melody, is considered one of the first of the uniquely American forms, having become popular in the late 1800s. Almost exclusively the work of blacks, "ragtime is the real soul music," Eubie says.

A Link With an Era

But in its revival, ragtime has emerged as concert music. "The revival is among young, white, conservatory-trained pianists," says music historian Robert Kimball, co-author of "Reminiscing with Sissle & Blake," a book released this year about Eubie's early Broadway career with his partner, Noble Sissle (who, at 84, is now retired and living in Florida). "What makes Eubie important is he's a link with those that went before him," Mr. Kimball says. "Eubie is the only one left to talk about and play music from the turn of the century with the authenticity of a man who was there at the beginning."

But Eubie isn't concerned with the reasons for his recent success. All he really cares about is writing and performing. Before he came out of retirement four years ago, his audiences were small indeed, consisting of inquisitive music students, his cat, his wife and friends. Then John Hammond, vice-president for talent acquisition for Columbia Records, suggested to Eubie that he cut a record. Eubie agreed. "The 86 Years of Eubie Blake," a two-record album, was his first in 50 years.

One thing led to another, and Eubie's career rematerialized. "Ragtime is back," Eubie says.

Although Eubie is currently known as a ragtime piano player, ragtime actually represents the earliest phase of his professional career, when "eating was the main consideration." In later years he was better known as a composer, conductor and writer of "Shuffle Along," the pioneer of black Broadway shows, for which "I'm Just Wild About Harry" was originally written.

Flashy and Complicated

But ragtime is his forte. It's flashy, complicated and as old as he is. "Ragtime is difficult to play, particularly for people who haven't heard it," says Max Morath, an entertainer and writer, who specializes in music from the turn of the century. "Piano players can play the notes, but the style is another matter," he says. "Eubie's got the kind of style that few can duplicate."

Ragtime syncopation calls for complex melodies played by the right hand to be accented and contrasted with the steady bass of the left. It's Eubie's left hand particularly that makes his playing distinctive. He plays a reverse boogie bass, sometimes called a wobbling bass. With his long fingers he can play with a mastery few can duplicate. "See, my fingers are so long I play tenths," he says. He can, in fact, span up to 12 keys, or some 11 inches. Most pianists settle for nine or 10 keys at best.

Eubie has always been sensitive about his hands. "My mother made me that way," he says. "As a kid she would always say, 'double up your hands, Eubie. You look like a pick-pocket.' I never did anything to hurt my hands," he says. "If anything ever happened to my hands, I'm finished."

But there's more to Eubie's comeback than his playing. "I'm good, but my best year was 1907," he says. Nowadays, he says, he often forgets passages and makes up something to fill in as he goes along. He says other musicians and critics are kind to him. "It's probably because of my age," he says.

Along with his playing, it's Eubie's vitality and his stories, which he has worked into a nicely paced routine that keep people coming back to see him. "Once you've seen Eubie work, you're a fan forever," says one jazz and ragtime enthusiast.

"When I'm on stage, I'm another person altogether, I don't get tired," Eubie says.

Indeed, Eubie is noticeably different on and off stage. Before going on for a performance, he usually sits off stage with his wife and manager, Marion, and some friends. He keeps his hands folded in his lap, like his mother would have wanted, and he talks slowly and quietly. To hear what's going on, he turns his head to favor his right ear because he's lost some hearing in his left ear. When it's time for his entrance, he walks to the edge of the stage with the help of a friend. He straightens up and steadies himself. Then the change occurs. Suddenly the doddering James Hubert Blake becomes the sprightly Eubie, and he literally sprints to the piano with his hands clasped above his head.

"When I walk on stage, they have the piano close, see, because if they don't people will think I'm drunk," he explains. Arthritis settled in his back some years ago,

so Eubie isn't always sure-footed. Unless he walks swiftly, he says, he staggers. He also knows that his audiences love to see him dash on stage.

A Notable Show

"A performer lives off applause," he says. "He won't make a dime unless he can get applause."

Eubie actually has had several careers, beginning at 17 as a piano player in a Baltimore bordello. He never made the transition to jazz when it preempted ragtime about 1917. Instead, Eubie joined the vaudeville circuit and after meeting his partner, Noble Sissle, in 1915 produced an act that was the rave of polite society. People like the Wanamakers and the Astors loved it.

Then in 1921, Eubie and Noble Sissle, with another team, wrote "Shuffle Along," a show notable on several counts. For one thing, it was the first effort by blacks to write, direct, produce and perform in a Broadway show. And, in an era, when the typical show was based on the European operetta form, "Shuffle Along" pioneered in melding jazz and blues into a Broadway review.

There were other Broadway shows for Eubie, and he wrote many big hits sung by such performers as Gertrude Lawrence, Sophie Tucker, Noel Coward and Ethel Waters. A second production of "Shuffle Along" in 1923 marked the beginning of careers for Josephine Baker and Paul Robeson.

When the Depression came, Eubie continued to write, producing the musical score for the Broadway show "Blackbirds" and songs like "Memories of You." Usually he wrote just the music, but for some of his songs he wrote the words as well. Meantime, the team of Sissle & Blake performed in five films.

The Leanest Year

In the early 1940s, Eubie was the musical conductor for a USO hospital unit. But by the mid-1940s jobs were scarce for Eubie. Ragtime had died long ago. In 1945, Eubie's leanest year, he made only $700 in royalties. He retired from performing in 1946 to spend the next 23 years writing at his home in Brooklyn.

It was during this time that he decided to go back to school. He had dropped out at age 15. He enrolled at New York University to study the Schillinger system of composition, a difficult mathematical system of composing, and graduated at age 66. He spent most of his retirement writing down in the Schillinger system old songs he had commited to memory but never written down in detail.

Eubie spends most of his day at the piano, practicing three hours, often writing more. "Sometimes I write so long, the lines on the paper commence to move on me," he says. Even Eubie's latest music sounds dated. It's highly unlikely to make the charts even as far as pleasing contemporary taste is concerned, though it is new. Unfortunately, Eubie's first love in music is the waltz. He wrote six last year.

In his old age, Eubie sleeps very little, sometimes less than four hours. He rises late and breakfasts on a couple of pancakes, but little else. He lives on 7-Up, tea,

cigarets and cigars. He weighs 125 pounds. "I've no stomach," he says, standing up tall and patting himself. He also has no hair. "I've been getting bald since I was 17," he says with a chuckle. The only hair on his head is a neatly clipped but thin mustache and sparce salt-and-pepper eyebrows.

A New Venture

Eubie's home is much like him, full of memories. He moved into a three-storey house in 1945 when he married his second wife, Marion. His first wife, Avis, died in 1939 after 29 years of marriage. The halls of the big brownstone are lined with pictures in black wooden frames dating back 50 years. The living room is small and cluttered with pictures, records and music. A black baby grand nearly fills the room. Eubie seldom ventures away from home except to perform.

Nowadays, the household is extra busy due to Eubie's newest interest. Eubie Blake Music, a record company. "We started a record company to keep up with Eubie's composing," says Carl Seltzer, Eubie's partner in the 19-month old company. The company began as a mail-order operation with two Eubie Blake records cut in Mr. Seltzer's small studio. The company started at Eubie's home using the Blake's personal Christmas-card list for potential customers. It now has grown to a wholesale business as well. "I'd say we've sold 5,000 records, which is pretty good," Mr. Seltzer says. The venture is just "slightly profitable", he adds. "Eubie does the playing, and I do all the rest," he says.

Most of the business details of Eubie's career are handled by other people, his wife, or his close friends. He has no children. "I'm taken care of like a racehorse," he says. His wife is his manager and agent. "My wife takes care of everything," Eubie says. Mrs. Blake, a former showgirl, didn't want Eubie to return to the stage. But since he has, she's been constantly busy arranging his appearances and setting up interviews.

Eubie's performances all involve the playing of ragtime, semiclassics and, of course, a lot of his songs, which have benefited from the revival. In a typical hour-long performance, he likes to talk about one-third of the time about his music and his life.

A son of former Virginia slaves, Eubie often comments on how he taught himself to speak "proper" English by listening to the radio and how he pretended he couldn't read music because blacks were supposed to be natural singers and musicians. "It wasn't easy for blacks when I started," he says. "Some great stars used to dress next to the toilet." Eubie says that at one time even record sales were segregated. "Race records weren't supposed to be sold to white people," he says.

Eubie's not sure why the tables are turned now. His audiences are nearly all white. But he's proud of the fact that his contributions are being appreciated by someone and that he won't be forgotten just because he's black. "People want to record me for history," he says proudly. He plans to donate his career memorabilia to a university, but he hasn't decided which one. Several have indicated an interest.

Retirement is simply out of the question for Eubie. "I'll keep performing," he says, "until one day while I'm on stage, the man upstairs says nine, 10 - you're out."

RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Golden Crest CRS-4127 "The Classic Rags Of Joe Lamb", played by Milton Kaye.

Selections: Hot Cinders, Alaskan Rag, Thoroughbred Rag, Sensation-A Rag, American Beauty Rag, Cleopatra Rag, Blue Grass Rag, Bohemia Rag, Reindeer-Ragtime Two Step, Top Liner Rag, Ragtime Bobolink, The Ragtime Nightingale, Arctic Sunset.

88 Up Right 88UR-002 "Don Ewell Plays King Oliver Creole Jazz Band Tunes"

Selections: Buddy's Habit, Working Man Blues, Froggy Moore, Sweet Baby Doll, Ain't Gonna Tell Nobody, Snake Rag, Weather Bird Rag, Where Did You Stay Last Night?, Just Gone, Mandy Lee Blues, Jazzin' Babies Blues, New Orleans Stomp.

Audex AX 102 "The St. Louis Ragtimers, Volume Four"

Selections: Loading Up The Mandy Lee*, The Chant, Snag It*, Down In Honky Tonky Town*, It Takes A Long Tall Brownskin Gal To Make A Preacher Lay His Bible Down*, Black Bottom Stomp, Everybody's Jazzin' It*, Sidewalk Blues, Coon Hollow Capers*, Cows May Come And Cows May Go But The Bull Goes On Forever*, When Sambo Goes To France*, Willie The Weeper.

Personnel: Bill Mason, cornet (plus harmonica on "Snag It", and occasional tambourine); Glen Meyer, clarinet; Trebor Jay Tichenor, piano; Al Stricker, banjo (vocal on selections marked "*"); Don Franz, tuba.

Audex AX 102 is available @ $5.00 postpaid from Goldenrod Showboat, Foot Of Locust Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63102.

These three fine LPs cut across the entire ragtime spectrum. On one end, we have the undeniably "classic" rags of Joseph Lamb, played by a pianist of impeccable "classical" credentials; at the other, a rollicking LP of ragtime instrumentals and rag songs, played by a unique little group that knows the idiom backwards and forwards; and in the middle, a most satisfying album of ragtime-jazz solos by a master pianist whose name is familiar to readers of this column.

The Kaye LP does full justice to Lamb's genius. It is well recorded, cleanly and sensitively played, and presents a varied program of Lamb solos. Rags published during the classic period are included as well as the more recently discovered selections, ranging from the jaunty, raggedy "Sensation" to the graceful, romantic "Bobolink".

Kaye adds further spice to the menu by injecting tasteful embellishments to Lamb's scores. As explained in a conversation with producer Rudi Blesh, included in the package on a bonus LP (recorded on one side only), these touches are usually

inserted on the repeats of a given strain, not only building the performances effectively but also giving the listener a chance to hear the original version the first time through.

Don Ewell's LP, a reissue of material which originally appeared on the Windin' Ball label some twenty years ago, contains some of his earliest recorded piano solos. The tunes themselves have the multi-strain character of rags, and Ewell is here playing in a relatively conventional ragtime style, heavily influenced by Jelly Roll Morton, as compared to his more recent recordings which display a stronger dose of the more open "Harlem stride" approach. For those reasons, this one is, even among Ewell's many excellent albums, especially attractive to ragtimers.

Unfortunately, the LP contains no information whatsoever as to source. I got mine through Coda Publications, a firm in Toronto specializing (among other things) in ragtime, and my guess is that specialty dealers will probably be the only practical means of purchase for it.

The remarkable St. Louis Ragtimers have once again come up with an engaging album of ragtime instrumentals and rag songs selected and performed with taste, care and skill. Their relentless good humor is exhilarating and infectious; it's a fine, fun album all the way, right up to the high standard of their three previous volumes, discussed in this column in November-December 1973. As can be seen from the above listing, many of the titles are not otherwise currently available on record, but "Sambo" is a special bonus in that regard, being probably the only recording ever of a Tom Turpin pop tune thought for many years to have been unpublished.

Three good records, each one presenting a somewhat different facet of ragtime. If you don't enjoy at least one of them, you are probably reading the wrong magazine.

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AMERICAN BANJO FRATERNITY - FIVE STRINGER

The banjo played an important part in the early development of the ragtime form of syncopation. In the past several years the ragtime revival has had a reciprocal effect in helping to create a renewed interest in the banjo. We know this from inquiries coming in from newer members. Eli Kaufman, a RAGTIME SOCIETY member of long standing and his wife Madeleine have been "instrumental" in forming an interest group which direct attention to the 5 string banjo. Interested SOCIETY members should be made aware of the fact that Eli and Madeleine edit and publish a newsletter for The American Banjo Fraternity known as "5 STRINGER".

A get-together rally of banjo enthusiasts is held periodically. A spring rally in May of 1973 was held at Lewistown, Pa. This was followed by another rally for the fall during the month of October.

Members wishing more information should write to THE AMERICAN BANJO FRATERNITY, c/o Mr. and Mrs. Elias Kaufman, 82 Brant Street, Buffalo, N. Y. 14226.

FORMER RAGTIME PIANO PLAYER

90-YEAR OLD WALTER N. H. HARDING DIES AT CHICAGO

(Ed. Comment: - The News was passed along by John Steiner and Mike Montgomery. John informs us that the Harding's music collection contained hundreds of rags mostly in new condition, sometimes with 3 to 5 duplicates, many obtained during the depression years from dealers selling off old stock at 1¢ to 5¢ a copy. The following was taken from the Chicago Daily News, Thursday December 13, 1973.)

"A 'Gold Mine' of Music Amid Squalor - By James Kloss

A 90-year old man died early Thursday in his run-down West Side home, where he kept a collection of rare sheet music and books worth up to $2 million.

Walter N. H. Harding, of 110 N. Pine, was found dead, apparently of a heart attack, by a window screen serviceman who was working on an adjoining building, police said.

Although Mr. Harding lived alone in squalor, his collection ranked "among the dozen most important private music collections in the world," according to Donald Krummel, a University of Illinois professor.

"It's an amazing collection and a strange story," said Krummel, former associate librarian at the Newberry Library.

Krummel estimated the collection was worth from $1 million to $2 million.

Mr. Harding's only apparent source of income was playing the organ for fraternal organizations and church groups, according to Krummel.

"It's odd, but perfectly true. I suspect he may have gotten a little money from his mother, but not much," Krummel said.

"He was continuing to buy things up to a few years ago - $100 to $200-a-throw for such things as a French opera score to fill in a gap in his collection."

Krummel visited Mr. Harding's home many times over the last 10 years to study the collection, which includes English song books dating between 1650 and 1900 as well as early American sheet music.

"It was a shock the first time I went there," Krummel recalled. "The dirt was inches thick, the wiring was exposed, the stuffing was coming out of the chairs."

"But in every room there were piles and piles of his collection everywhere - in boxes, on shelves and on the floor."

Mr. Harding came to America from England at the age of 4 with his parents. He never married and lived with his mother until her death a few years ago, according to Krummel.

Watchmen from a private security firm were sent to guard the home immediately after news of Mr. Harding's death reached the Northern Trust Bank, executors of his estate.

The collection has been willed to the Bodleian Library of Oxford University in England.

"I don't think he had any relatives and I don't know who his friends were - if he had any," Krummel said.

He said Mr. Harding loved music and in the early 1900s worked in Chicago as a ragtime piano player. Later he played the organ in movie houses during the silent film era.

The core of Mr. Harding's collection are songbooks originally collected by Sir John Stainer, an English composer and scholar.

"He bought it at an auction in 1930 when prices were cheap. I think that collection got him really started," Krummel said.

Items in the collection include early printed editions of music by Stephen Foster, and song books by composers Scott Joplin, Henry Cary, James Hook, Charles Dibden and John Playford."

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ST. LOUIS RAGTIMERS AT CEMETERY

LIVING RAGTIME VISITS THE RESTING PLACE OF RAGTIMER PERCY WENRICH 1880 - 1952

By David W. Wallace, Jr.

Joplin, Missouri celebrates its Centennial this year. June 29th was designated "Percy Wenrich Day" to honor this native born composer. A full day of activities consisted of amateur ragtime musicians (including Susan Spracklen, younger sister of ragtimer Steve Spracklen) performing from 10:00 a. m. to 1:00 p. m. at local business establishments.

At noon, a parade consisting of 18 antique cars with occupants dressed in period costumes formed in the heart of the city and proceeded to Fairview cemetery, where Wenrich is buried. Leading the processional was a vintage flatbed truck carrying the St. Louis Ragtimers who played a medley of Wenrich tunes as a tribute to the composer. Riding in open cars were ragtime performers Bob Darch, Steve Spracklen and Ray Rose.

In a touching ceremony, a bouquet of red roses and yellow tulips was placed on Wenrich's headstone and Bob Darch and local dignitaries spoke of Percy Wenrich's contribution to music. A bronze plaque bearing a rose and tulip and the inscription "The Playing of His Music is the True Memorial" was dedicated and affixed to the wrought iron fence surrounding the Wenrich family plot.

The event concluded with the trumpet player of the St. Louis Ragtimers performing a solo rendition of Wenrich's well known composition "When You Wore a Tulip and I Wore a Big, Red Rose".

On the evening of June 29th a concert was held before a sellout crowd of 1300 individuals. Those performing were Bob Darch, Steve Spracklen, Ray Rose and the St. Louis Ragtimers, as well as barbershop quartet who presented the music of Percy Wenrich, composer who brought pleasure to many people.

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SCOTT JOPLIN FORGOTTEN

Scott Joplin died on April 1, 1917 in the Manhattan State Hospital where it had been necessary to commit him during the fall of the previous year. He was born in Texarkana, Texas on November 24, 1868. His father Giles had been a slave. His mother had been born free. Both parents had musical talent that was inherited by Scott and his brothers and sisters.

We know then that Scott Joplin was born some 105 years ago and that he died at the age of 48, a broken and almost forgotten man.

Today the name Scott Joplin is heard everywhere we turn in the world of music. Tremendous adulation has been accorded Scott Joplin, the king of ragtime composers, which gives recognition and praise to the music he left behind when he departed this life.

But what has been said of the mortal remains of this great composer? Member Tom Noel of Brooklyn, N. Y. attended our Bash last October and in November wrote the following, taken from his letter: "This is something that should interest you. I have been meaning for some time to visit the grave of Scott Joplin, had been hoping to do it prior to the recent Bash but simply was pressed for time and had to neglect it. I finally got out there to St. Michael's Cemetery, a long subway ride and a long, long walk of perhaps 2 miles or more. The office exacted a dollar of me to locate the grave and then asked if I were a member of the family. They said there were certain assessments outstanding against the plot. It seems that in 1968 they levied an annual assessment of $15 for general upkeep and there is now a sum of $90 against it. Anyhow I found it quite easily, although it is an unmarked grave and you would not otherwise know there is a grave there. It is an unkept area with several other missing headstones in that area. I felt very sad that our great patron and originator of an original native art lies so neglected. I guess we have to be forever grateful for the beautiful music he left to the world."

(Ed. Comment: The message is clear enough. The Scott Joplin who gave us classical ragtime actually lies today forgotten and unknown in an unmarked grave. Surely the arranging and placing of a modest memorial marker would provide a partial remedy. Perhaps concerned ragtimers living in the New York City area will be motivated to get together and determine, as a project, what would be appropriate and possible at St. Michael's Cemetery. In the meantime, we thank Tom Noel for passing on the information about his discovery.)

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BOOK REVIEW

"Classic Piano Rags", selected and with an introduction by Rudi Blesh (with assistance from Trebor Tichenor), Dover Publications, $6.00

If, like me, you've been buying every piece of ragtime sheet music you could find for the last several years, you'll still come up here with at least ten numbers that have not been commercially available, to my knowledge, during the ragtime revival -- a good buy, at 60¢ a rag. The rest of the 81 truly classic rags in this marvelous collection could be regarded as a bonus but, unless you're one of the few owning a copy of Max Morath's out-of-print "100 Ragtime Classics", you probably won't have copies of those either.

Space precludes listing all titles, but they include representatives of the best work of over a dozen of the top rank of St. Louis-Sedalia-style ragtime composers, such as Joplin (22 rags, including 4 collaborations -- the only part of the volume that duplicates much material already on the market), Scott (19), Lamb (9), Hunter (6), Turpin (5, including the best -- previously unavailable -- of the three published arrangements of "Harlem Rag"), Matthews (5, all of the "Pastime" rags!), and Marshall (4). All selections are indisputably of the high quality that has come to be known as "classic" ragtime, and a rather good proportion of these, in my view, are capable of being performed by the average parlor pianist -- the person with a basic knowledge of technique and musical notation who has a desire and dedication to play ragtime.

Black and white reproductions of the original covers to all titles are included. A nice touch, but the volume's layout for performance purposes would have been improved if the cover had been printed as the last page, instead of the more normal first page, in the 31 cases where the current design requires the pianist to turn the page an additional and unnecessary time to get through the tune -- for example, five of the Scott rags consisting of only two pages of music are printed with the cover on a left-hand page facing the music (which is printed back-to-back on the succeeding two pages).

Such latter criticism, however, must be considered as of minor importance when viewed in the light of the wealth of top-quality ragtime presented here at a bargain price.

A fine cross-section of the field, providing a ragtime pianist with a repertoire that, in only one volume, is more than enough to meet nearly any requirement for ragtime performance from fun in the living room to the professional concert stage. Highly recommended.

- Tex Wyndham

LETTERS

Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

You will be interested to hear that Universal Films is releasing picture around Christmas called "The Sting", featuring Richard Redfield, Steve McQueen (if that's the right spelling), and a score by Joplin. They are planning to issue a soundtrack album and some single records as well.

The other news of interest to ragtimers is that the instrumentations of the Joplin rags in the "Red Back Book" will shortly be published in Gunther Schuller's editions as played on the Angel record. More recordings of the instrumentations, played by Mr. Schuller and his group, are on the way -- but not from Angel.

Vera Brodsky Lawrence
New York, N.Y., U.S.A.

For your information and records I am enclosing the programme of a concert of Scott Joplin's music which Joshua Rifkin presented recently at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The concert was received with great enthusiasm by an audience of people of all ages.

William Hyder
Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

(Ed. Comment: At this concert presented by S. Hurok Concerts Inc. and Nonesuch Records, Joshua played 16 rags by Scott Joplin. The last 2, Heliotrope Bouquet and The Ragtime Dance, were played to an enthusiastic audience as encores. The Lisner Auditorium was used for the occasion on November 17, 1973.)

Baron McCormick
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Draws attention to the fact that the successful concert performed by Eubie Blake and Ragtime Bob Darch on October 12, 1973 at York University represents the first occasion these two artists and friends of long standing, have appeared together at a public performance in Canada.

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Lothar van der Sluijs
Gasthuissingel 12 Zwart
Haarlem, Holland

Would like fellow ragtimers in Holland or reasonably near to contact him.

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Roger Richard
Lamothe
43100 Brioude, France

Would like visiting Ragtimers to contact him.

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Craig Huber
6203 Foster, Apt. #3
Overland Park, Kansas 66202
362-3945

Would like any Ragtimers around Kansas City to get in touch. He has just moved from St. Louis.

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Bruce S. Karpe
Blair Academy, Box 120
Blairstown, N. J. 07825

A senior at Blair Academy is planning a program of Ragtime music at their yearly festival. Any member near by with any music, scores, or advice might contact Bruce.

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SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN
- at A. J. Rest. /Tavern, 156 Cumberland Street, Toronto, Mon. to Fri. 6:15 p. m. to 8:00 p. m.
- in the Odyssey Lounge at the top of the Hyatt Regency, Toronto, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.

DON EWELL
- at the Life Lounge, 3233 N. Ocean Blvd., Fort Laurderdale, Florida, with Andy Bartha and the Deep South Dixieland Jazz Band.

DAVE FLOWITT
- at the Brunswick Hotel, 481 Bloor St. W., with the Climax Jazz Band, Wed. 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.
- at Grossman's Tavern, 379 Spadina Ave., with Dr. MacJazz band, Thurs. 8:30 p. m. to 12:30 a. m.

JIM KAPLAN
- at the Pizza-Stein, 1428 W. Galena Ave., Freeport, Illinois on Tues., Fri. and Sundays.

RAGTIME $ BILL MAYHERCY
- at Ramada Inn, Steamboat Springs, Colorado, Thru Easter, 1974.

MIKE MONTGOMERY
- at The Dakota Inn, Rathskeller, Detroit, Mich. Friday nights.

MAX MORATH
- and his new show "The Ragtime Years" at Hayloft Dinner Theater, Manassas, Virginia, April 8 to May 5. Currently on tour college circuit and other one night concerts.

DR. ELI NEWBERGER	- and The New Black Eagle Jazz Band at the Stickey Wicket Pub, West Main Street, Hopkinton, Mass. Thurs. 8:00 p. m. to 12:00 p. m. (Pianist is Bob Pilsbury.).
TOM NOEL	- on the road with lis living portrayal show "Mark Twain At Home". Southampton Princess Hotel, Bermuda, February 21 to March 7.
CHARLIE RASCH	- with Sister Kate, at Little Caesars, 15060 Eureka Road, Southgate, Michigan, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.
BOB SEELEY	- at Charlie's Crab Restaurant & Lounge, 3230 Pine Lake Road, Orchard Lake, Michigan, Monday thru Saturday.
DAN SUMMERS	- and the New Charleston Chasers (with the ODJB sound), at Speak Steak House, Whirlpool St. at Cleveland Avenue, Niagara Falls, N. Y., Saturday nights and some Friday nights.
TREBOR TICHENOR	- and the Saint Louis Ragtimers, on The Goldenrod Showboat, at St. Louis, Missouri. (Also do playing dates on the riverboat Becky Thatcher)
TERRY WALDO	- at Deibel's Restaurant, German Village, Columbus, Ohio, Wednesday and Thursday nights.
TEX WYNDHAM	- and The Red Lion Jazz Band, appearing regularly, at The Surrey Restaurant, 1101 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Del.

PERFORMERS: Please keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

$6.00

CLASSIC PIANO RAGS

Selected and with an Introduction by
Rudi Blesh

Works by
Scott Joplin
James Scott
Joseph Lamb
Tom Turpin
Arthur Marshall
Charles H. Hunter
Artie Matthews
Robert Hampton
Clarence Woods
Charles Johnson
Joe Jordan
Charles Thompson
Percy Wenrich
Louis Chauvin
Scott Hayden

Complete Original Music for 81 Piano Rags